

# PEARL of the ARMY

Guy W. McConnell

## SYNOPSIS.

Capt. Ralph Payne, U. S. A., is given secret plans of defense to deliver to Panama. He attends a ball at the home of his sweetheart, Colonel Dare's daughter, Pearl. As a climax to a series of mysterious incidents he is arrested for treason. The ambassador of Granada is found dead and the plans missing from Payne's coat. Major Brent, Payne's rival, enters into suspicious negotiations with Bertha Bonn. Pearl follows a burglar from her home; is drugged and left in a field, and later overhears plotters, who almost capture her. Payne is sentenced to life imprisonment.

## THIRD EPISODE

### The Silent Menace.

Toward sunrise on the following day a corporal of the guard entered Captain Payne's room at the Washington barracks. He found the celebrated prisoner fully dressed and awaiting the punishment about to be his, whereby he would become one of the lost citizens of the republic which, according to the findings of the court, he was guilty of conspiring against with a southern neighbor.

Payne gazed with polite questioning at the hesitating figure on the threshold.

"Captain," whispered the latter who had served with him in the Philippines and also in the Boxer rebellion; "I've got to prepare you for something nasty." Forgetting himself for a moment, his eyes flashed and he swore. "They haven't done it since the '70's! You'd think it was war times! The good of the service!"

A cold light glittered in the captain's eyes. "You don't mean that they're going to drum me out, Smithy?" Payne unconsciously fell at that unguarded moment into barrack's mess vernacular.

The corporal nodded slowly. "Thanks!" grunted the officer, after a tense pause. "You've helped me a lot by that tip."

"I'd do more than that for you, captain," quickly insinuated Corporal Smithy.

"Get rid of yourself, sir!" sharply retorted his superior.

"Somebody will wake up about you when it's too late," muttered Smithy. "You're no more guilty than I be." Then he went out.

At that moment the Payne case was being discussed by a group secretly assembled in the library at the residence of the secretary of war in the city of Washington. Here after an all-night conference at the department came the chief of the army staff to report to the president and several members of his cabinet.

The thoughtful countenance of the country's chief magistrate reflected the serious import of this meeting. "The man you say was supposed to be dying?"

"Death was only a question of hours," replied the war secretary to whom the question was addressed.

"And there is no clue?"

"He has seemingly disappeared off the face of the earth leaving no trace."

"Your conclusion is that he has been stolen by an enemy who in some way gained knowledge of his discovery of our weakness in defense of the canal and his strategy to overcome it?"

"We believe that after Payne disposed of this mysterious author's invention to the Granadan ambassador," interposed the chief of the army staff; "or before he did so, either his or De Mira's lieutenants made away with him fearing that he might recover consciousness and tell everything, which under the circumstances, doubtless he would have done."

"Payne admitted at the court-martial that he was in the neighborhood when the stranger disappeared. Nor did he deny that he talked alone with the ambassador shortly before the latter's dead body was found. It was then, we believe, that Payne gave him the canal plans and the lock and containing the waters necessary to their interpretation. De Mira, after possessing our secret, must have lost his nerve and poisoned himself. He doubtless thought that Payne would at the last minute break down and confess his guilt."

A shade of regret stole into the barred features of the president. "Perhaps we hastened Payne's trial," he pondered. "Reflection might have brought repentance. We cannot expect him now, sullen and stubborn, to aid us in unearthing the one man, if he be still alive, who holds the key to the safety and security of our canal possession. Have we blundered, gentlemen?"

"No!" exclaimed some one. "Payne's swift and summary punishment was imperative to satiate a public desire to criticize everything pertaining to the army and the administration. Furthermore, I beg to differ with the president on one point. There is a way, I think, to make him talk."

The president raised his eyebrows, inclining his head toward the speaker. "He worships Pearl Dare. He will talk to her if she urges him."

"I know her well," warmly responded the chief of staff to that. "She loves or loved him. I understood from

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her father tonight that they were on the point of announcing their engagement when this thing happened. There are, therefore, other than patriotic motives why she should undertake to get at the bottom of the man. The Dare's— He stopped speaking listened intently a second or two and tip-toed to a window. They all heard a throbbing noise on the street. He turned with an explanatory exclamation. "Here she is now in her automobile!"

A curious hush fell upon the group and the war secretary hastened from the room. When he returned, after an interval, Pearl Dare, dazed and disheveled, leaned wearily upon his arm.

Her eyes at once caught the figure of the president. She tottered toward him dropping on her knees. He raised her gently, motioning the others aside to give her a chance to collect herself for it was apparent that she was deeply agitated.

"Captain Payne!" presently burst from her lips. She gestured dumbly toward the telephone. "A great mistake has been made! Stop it—he's innocent!"

Then she became inarticulate and grew very pale. A clock on the mantel was striking the hour of six.

Pearl slowly bowed her head, choking back tears. Through a slit in the window blinds filtered a streak of sunlight.

"God forbid if we have erred!" murmured the secretary of war, at the conclusion of the sixth stroke, his eyes fixed upon the clock. "The sentence of Ralph Payne has been executed."

Pearl turned upon them furiously, crying out: "You idiots!"

Then she faltered. They carried her to a sofa and summoned the colonel from the barracks. To him, when she had sufficiently recovered, she related her wild and incomprehensible adventure.

The colonel listened doubtfully to her tale. He called in the chauffeur, Toko, inquiring whether any of the Dare servants had mentioned burglars in the house during the night.

Toko nodded. "Mimi—she smell of chloroform. Say someone knock her out!"

The colonel dismissed him, more perplexed than ever, for this much of Pearl's story was corroborated. But he could not wholly believe that a band of gentlemen such as she described the foreign alliance to be was secretly plotting to overthrow the government by casting the guilt upon De Mira and the former officer Ralph Payne. Rather from her appearance and condition, and the fact that she could but vaguely recall the rendezvous and not at all designate its whereabouts, was he inclined to the opinion that she had fallen into the hands of common ruffians of De Mira or Payne, escaping in some miraculous manner after being drugged.

Pearl stuck to her testimony, however, repeating it clearly and concisely to the president and his counselors. To her emphatic reiteration that the leader of this mysterious group of political criminals was a man of distinguished rank and great personality, the president gave sphinxlike attention.

"You would recognize his figure—his voice—you think?"

Pearl hesitated. "I am not sure." She ran her hand wearily across her forehead. "I'm so confused."

After a silence, the president with a significant glance at the others, took Pearl kindly by the hand. "Perhaps you would be willing to do me a personal service, Miss Dare, and thus satisfy your own peace of mind in this whole matter?"

Colonel Dare's daughter flushed under the implied confidence of the nation's executive. She nodded eager assent.

"Suppose you carry from me a note to Mr. Payne. After reading it, if he is innocent, he will tell you so. And if he is guilty as the facts unfortunately point, I think that he will confide in you. Is this requesting too much?"

She gazed tremulously into the president's eyes. They were very human. "All I ask is that our interview be a private one," she replied, simply.

The president scribbled a few words upon a sheet of paper and gave it to her. Pearl rose, bowed deferentially and left the room on her father's arm followed by a battery of attentive and admiring eyes.

Then began a long discussion. That evening Pearl, accompanied only by Toko, took the "limited" south.

At the Washington barracks a special stop was made and two federal guards hustled Payne up the steps and into a private compartment. Knowing that the trip would consume the better part of forty-eight hours, Pearl postponed the dreaded interview until morning in the hope that a night of much needed repose would steel her heart to the trial no matter what the outcome; and she did not notify the prisoner that she was on the train.

Few of the passengers were aware of the celebrated company they were in that night; not even Bertha Bonn, who, dismayed to find herself mixed up with Payne, had delayed her departure for the Paso del Norte with the packet and locket pending further developments. Nor did Bertha know that the girl, to marry whom Major Brent sought to silence her, occupied the drawing room in the coach ahead. Otherwise in his agitated frame of mind she might have gone and told her everything about the major, she spent most of the night studying time tables and wondering what secret the packet in her traveling case contained.

Pearl sat alone in her unmade berth until a very late hour, unable to restrain a natural curiosity concerning the import of the message she carried from the president to the disgraced ex-officer.

She was in a sense glad for the train ride for it gave her an opportunity to relax. She found herself taking a passing interest in scenes and incidents noticeable from the car window. Her mind began to grow sluggish and her eyes to droop and she was on the point of calling the vestibule porter to prepare her bed.

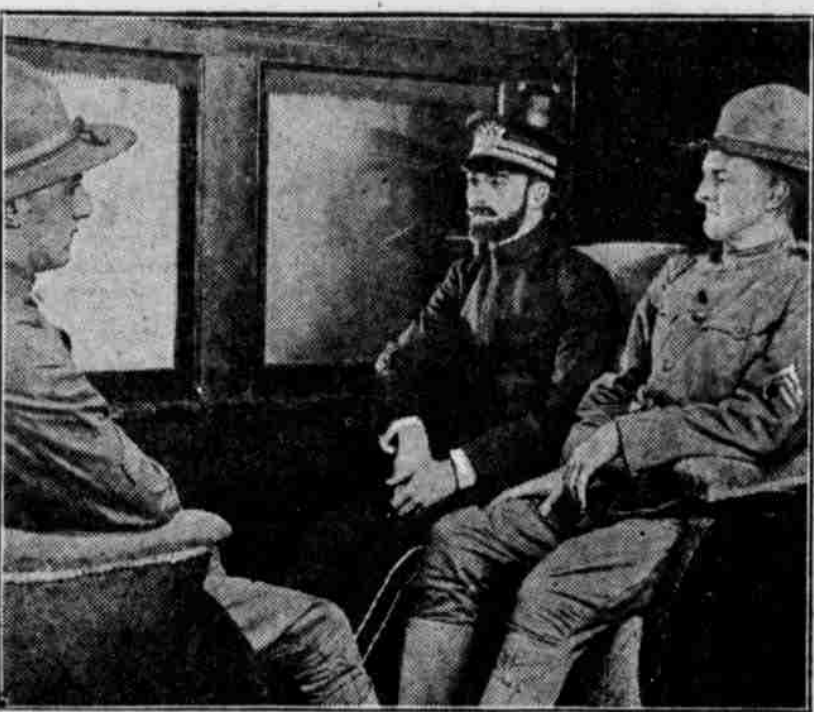
Then to the swiftly-speeding "flyer" came a series of terrific shocks, hurling her to the floor just as the lights went out and the car began to pitch and roll.

A portion of the top berth fell bare, missing where she half lay, half crouched, stunned, and as all the world seemed to stand still, she heard the crash of glass, steel demolishing steel, an explosion or two and an outburst of human cries. A little later she climbed out of the debris of her coach and leaped unharmed to the railroad tracks below.

Below her appalled gaze lay the gnarled, twisted and telescoped ruins of the luxurious train. Fires were breaking out and in the rising steam she caught glimpses of disfigured dead, dying and wounded travelers and partly clad people running about wildly. She realized that she was in the midst of a frightful railroad catastrophe.

Immediately she thought of both Payne and Toko and began a frantic search for the former, blindly following the lead of trainmen with lanterns.

A thunderstorm which had been prevailing now ceased, but the night remained inky black, illumined only by the conflagration of the wreck. After a fruitless hour the bodies of first one and then the other of Payne's guards were found lying fully a car's length apart. At this point Pearl discovered a woman seated on some broken



Payne on His Way to Life Imprisonment.

trucks. Her clothing was torn; her hair was streaming; and she was acting queerly. In one hand she held something taken out of a small traveling case. Pearl saw her stuff it into the bosom of her shirtwaist and caught the gleam of a gold locket dangling at her neck.

It was Bertha Bonn. Pearl wondered where she had seen this person before.

Then in the avalanche of junk behind the woman, Pearl, a man with a lantern hitherto unnoticed, and Toko, who suddenly appeared from somewhere, simultaneously saw a huddled-up form in army clothes. Pearl uttered a little cry. Toko muttered something unintelligible. The woman rose and following their stares, stifled a choking sound. Pearl, drawing near to the still figure seeing in it the only too familiar outlines, gave a little shudder.

The stranger with the lantern sternly waved her back, but too late. In the fitful light she observed a hideously crushed and unrecognizable bearded face.

She stooped trembling and examined the man's clothing, jerking a slip of paper from the coat pocket.

Her eyes filled, for the penciled scrawl she read with the lantern's aid was in the unmistakable handwriting of Ralph Payne. And its signature was genuine.

TO MY EXECUTORS:

I die innocent of the crime of which I have been made the victim of others unknown to me. I leave my entire fortune to Pearl Dare as sole trustee, to use in unearthing the criminals for whose discovery and punishment I make my last prayer.

A solemn silence fell upon the tragic scene.

"Too late!" breathed the stricken girl. Her eyes met Toko's for the first time. "He's dead!"

"I have already telephoned Colonel Dare to come for you," he said gently. Together they moved away. The man with the lantern now gave Bertha Bonn a great start.

"I've been trying to catch up with you for some time, Miss Bonn," he stammered. "I'd thank you to let me have them papers you j-just stuck in your dress and that locket o-o-d your neck."

She recoiled.

"What do you mean? Who are you?"

"T. O. Adams of Monk's Corner, Nebraska, ma'am; that's m-me. Let m-me have them, please!" He spoke peremptorily.

She turned, but before she could escape he caught and plied her wrists, snatching the packet from her bosom and tearing the locket from the chain. Whereupon he released her and bowed to her profusely.

"Thanks, Miss Bonn!" he mocked. Though outraged and frightened, curiosity was uppermost in her appraisal of him. He was a tall, well-set-up young fellow in common, though not ill-fitting clothes, which were soiled and torn in several places. His face, partly shaded by a slouch hat, bore the marks of bruises and was red as from sunburn or overdrinking. His features for an ordinary man were well cut. In a clearer light Bertha thought that he might be very good-looking.

Boistering her courage, she ventured the all-important question: "Where is my photograph?"

"The photograph that was taken from the locket."

"The photograph that was taken from the locket?"

"Yes!"

"You g-got me." He eyed her curiously.

She grew irritated. "As you must well know its return was assured me by—by Mr. Payne."

"Oh!" He became very alert. "That photograph! I'm sorry to say I haven't got it with m-me, Miss Bonn. Let-me-see, where d-did I leave Payne's photo?"

He scratched his head and looked in the direction of the body of the person whose name had passed between them.

"Not Payne's! Major Brent's!" She advanced a pace or two. "Don't trifle with me! You're either very stupid or a mighty poor bluffer!"

The man was staring strangely, for the moment forgetful of the packet and locket. With a quick movement she knocked both out of his hand. Then the first of several uncanny things happened. He tumbled in a heap as if stricken by an invisible force.

She grabbed the lantern and

on the grass. Her face was damp with tears. She looked up as he was passing and spoke.

"Can you tell me, please, when the relief train will arrive?"

"No, ma'am, I can't. Shall I find out?"

She shook her head wearily. "Are you also a wreck victim?"

"Not exactly t-that."

"You seem to have been injured?"

"Just b-bruised. And you, ma'am?"

She negatived. "You are the man who helped me—" Her voice broke.

Adams bowed gravely. "The m-man with the lantern. The dead fellow was a friend of your'n, wasn't he?"

She shivered. "The dead man was Capt. Ralph Payne. I am Miss Pearl Dare. What is your name?"

"T. O. Adams of Monk's Corner, Nebraska," he responded for the second time that night.

"Monk's Corner!" she echoed.

"It's not on the m-map. It's a c-cow town."

"Oh!" She looked at him with some interest. "You must be a cowboy then!"

"Yes'm."

She felt that he was evading her.

"I'm too curious," said she, apologetically.

A pleasant light came into his eyes.

"Kin I s-sit down and talk with you a w-while? Maybe I kin help you i-in your trouble. You seem to have a-a lot of it o-on your mind."

She signified an indifferent willingness.

"Cowboys make good soldiers," she commented to keep up the conversation which diverted her.

"Yes'm."

She looked at him askance.

"You'd look the part in uniform. Have you ever thought of joining the army? The country needs fighting men these days."

"Yes'm, I hev. How do you g-go about it? You travel around a b-bit in the army, don't y-you? Would m-my stuttering keep me out? Your dad's a great soldier, ain't he?"

The man's simple mind amused Pearl. "You ask too many questions at once," she replied with a little laugh. "I'll answer them all in one. Talk with my father when he arrives if the subject appeals to you seriously."

"Waal," he reflected. "I ain't g-got anything else to do, I m-might as well soldier." Then he changed the subject. "That there Captain Payne was s-some officer, w-wasn't he? Insinuation lurked in his voice."

"What do you know about Captain Payne?" she asked sharply.

He replied in an indifferent tone. "Nothin' mebbe except w-what I seen in t-the newspapers. They're always a b-bundle of lies, anyway."

She seemed to like that.

"Kin I s-smoke?" he asked, opening a cigarette case.

His observance of polite form was unexpected to Pearl. Her curiosity deepened.

"He m-meant a lot to you, d-didn't he?" he observed, hunting matches in his pocket.

"Very much, indeed," she murmured sadly in the momentary silence which had fallen.

"Now that t-there note—" He struck a match and calmly lit a cigarette.

"That there note," he repeated, inhaling deeply; "that there last w-will and t-testament of his. T-that's a pretty big j-job for a little girl like you t-to tackle."

She sat up and glanced at his profile. He smoked and stared straight ahead purposely avoiding her eyes.

"Are you g-going to tackle it?" he questioned with a puzzling frankness.

Their eyes now met. "Why do you ask?"

"I'd like to help you."

"You?"

"Why not? I ain't g-got a job j-just now."

"I fear that a cowboy could not be of much assistance," she replied, indulgently.

"I'm a b-barber, too," he rejoined. "Barbers hear a l-lot of funny things, ma'am."

The idea seemed so fanciful that she giggled. "What else have you been?"

"Waal," he drawled, taking a soiled envelope from his inner coat pocket; "I've been a little of everything, I g-guess." He took a card out of the envelope and handed it to her. "M-my specialty of late's b-been telegraph o-o-perating."

He struck a match so that she could read. The card identified him as T. O. Adams, a member of the Organization of Telegraphers, a sort of trades-union.

"Operators hear a l-lot of things, t-too, ma'am," he drawled, putting the card back in the envelope which he returned to his pocket.

"Have you ever been a waiter in a hotel?" There was a touch of rillery in her voice.

"I've been t-that, too," he answered, untruffled.

"What haven't you been?"

"Nothin', m-ma'am, nothin'."

Again she questioned him with her eyes.

"W-waiters hear things, t-too," commented he.

Pearl did not know whether to stop or continue this seemingly empty talk.

"What, for example? Have you ever heard anything about Captain Payne?"

"Anything—pertaining to this case?"

"I g-got a notion that I know w-where them military plans and t-that there locket is at this m-minute," he stated as calmly as if they were discussing the weather.

Both rose simultaneously.

"Where?" she ejaculated.

It was Adams' turn to be indignant. "If y-you decide to employ m-me to

help you, I'll t-tell you where I think they are."

Pearl became cautious. "You'll have to see my father about that also," she replied, icily.

He bowed and instead of continuing on to the shelter abruptly disappeared in a clump of bushes.

Without hesitation Pearl followed. All along he had reminded her of some one whom she had seen somewhere. Now there flashed into her mind that he must be a member of the foreign alliance posing as a tramp. The thought that she might be pursuing danger never occurred to her.

Adams, knowing that he was being followed, quickened his step, striking out with strong strides along a timberland road which soon began to wind up a hill. He started to run and was quickly out of her sight. Half way to the summit he stopped, straining his ears as if for an expected signal. Then he dashed across the trail and entered the woods. When Pearl came up she paused, bewildered, and went on. She reached the ridge just as dawn was streaking the horizon.

Below lay a sheet of water on which not a ripple moved. To her right on a bluff was a curious looking shack from which ran many wires to a tall pole with cross-arms. She had seen a wireless station before and instantly recognized this as one. She approached it noiselessly and finding the door partly open looked in.

At first she saw nothing. Then suddenly upon the inner wall flashed a shadow which deepened into the silhouette of a man whose features were masked. In one hand he held a little round object. His fingers pressed it. A lid flew open. It was a locket. In the other hand was what appeared to be an envelope.

This now happened: The shadow opened the locket and took from it two disks which he slipped into the envelope through a slit at one edge.

Then the shadow became a blur against the wall and at the same time Pearl heard footsteps, a muttered foreign oath and a scurry of feet. She wheeled about. In her direct gaze was a reluctant moon, its translucent rays dazzling her vision.

What happened next will never be quite clear to her mind. She remembered that she peered about cautiously; that, catching sight of a muffled man behind the shack, she requested him to show himself; that he obeyed with reluctance, whereupon she demanded the envelope; that he started to comply with disarming servility.

Then she remembered nothing except a swift encounter, a struggle for the envelope on the edge of the bluff, the sensation accompanying a seemingly never-ending drop through space and a plunge into deep water.

She had a hazy recollection of a reassuring answer to her screams for assistance just before her body struck the surface of the stream; while immersed of seeing the muffled still upon the face of her antagonist; and the presence of a third person swimming furiously toward her.

She was prone on the shore when she revived. Toko was rubbing her vigorously.

Great joy appeared on Toko's face when she opened her eyes. He was dripping wet, too. The sight of him relieved her.

"Did you see him? Was it you who saved me?"

"Yes," replied Toko, still rubbing. "I follow you. He get away."

She leaped to her feet. "We must find him, Toko! He is—is a great criminal! He possesses a priceless military secret! I saw it! I had it in my hands! Which way did he go?"

"I didn't know!" exclaimed Toko with regret and concern. "I show you!"

They hurried along the shore.

"Ah!" exclaimed Toko after some minutes of fast running. He stopped, pointing to a muffer in the sand. She picked it up as they ran.

A few minutes later they again stopped, seeing a figure seated upon a rock just ahead. It was Adams.

They crept close behind him, who unaware of discovery was closely examining a sheet of parchmentlike paper about thirteen inches square.

It was the plan of military weakness and defense of the canal! Nor was the sketch now invisible. The water had dissolved the chemical disks revealing the hidden secret.

Quick as a flash both Pearl and Toko leaped upon Adams.

"You are the leader of the foreign alliance!" she panted as they went down, struggling. "You are the Silent Menace!"

(END OF EPISODE THREE.)

Indigo in Southern India. A primitive but effective method of obtaining indigo in southern India is practiced by the natives. The plant is tightly packed the day it is cut, in a large vat, into which water is run, and boards are then placed over the top and are kept in position by heavy crossbeams. The plant is allowed to soak for ten or twelve hours, during which time a heavy fermentation takes place. The liquid is then drained off into another vat, after which, coolies beat and stir the soaked mass thoroughly with flails until the dye begins to emerge. The whole is then allowed to settle; the clear liquid is drained off, and the residue is boiled in copper vessels. It is then pressed into hard cakes ready for the market.

Thank a Woman for This New Idea. "Who is that man?" asked the giddy young person.

"A farm demonstrator."

"Indeed? I notice he has a large, flat case under his arm. Do you suppose it contains a sample farm?"—Birmingham Age-Herald.

## SICK WOMAN HAD CRYING SPELLS

Restored to Health by Lydia E. Pinkham's Vegetable Compound.

Enhaut, Pa.—"I was all run down and weak inwardly. I had female troubles and nervous feelings and my head bothered me. I would often have crying spells and feel as if I was not safe. If I heard anyone coming I would run and lock the door so they would not see me. I tried several doctors and they did not help me so I said to my mother 'I guess I will have to die as there is no help for me.' She